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## THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Whatever differences of opinion there may be with regard to the precise meaning of the term "sociology," it will be generally admitted that it indicates in a more or less satisfactory way a field of investigation, important and but partially exploited, differing from that of economics and political science. As early as 1836 John Stuart Mill held that the time was ripe for marking off from economics a general social science to which he gave the name of "social philosophy." At all events there is a sociological viewpoint quite distinct from the political and the economic, and the distinction has been recognized in a multitude of ways. There are professors and instructors of sociology in several of our educational institutions, and in nearly all of them courses are offered in sociology. The literature of the subject, even if we count only those books and articles which advisedly bear the designation, is extensive and by no means without influence. Three periodicals—American, French, and Italian—are entitled sociological, and several European countries already possess sociological associations which hold regular scientific meetings and publish papers and "proceedings."

Since, then, the term "sociology" has come to stay, and is used to designate a certain (or uncertain) subject or group of subjects, and since the number of those who are devoting time and energy to sociology is not only large, but apparently increasing, the same considerations which have made it desirable for economists, political scientists, statisticians, and historians to form scientific associations for the encouragement of research and discussion and for mutual intercourse, apply with equal force to sociologists. Nay, they apply with more force, inasmuch as theoretical sociology has grown up mainly through the work of mentally isolated thinkers, who have developed their own views to the neglect

of much that is valuable in the work of others. Academic sociologists, moreover, have too frequently lost sight of the connection which exists, or ought to exist, between the theoretical and analytical aspects of the subject, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, its practical aspects. Meanwhile many practical sociologists have known little, and cared less, for theoretical sociology, and in some instances have shown a tendency to fall into empiricism. To bring these classes together would help them all, and at the same time exalt sociology in the eyes of the general public.

It was to accomplish this bringing together that a general invitation was issued last December to about two hundred and fifty persons supposed to be interested in sociology, calling for a conference at Baltimore to discuss the advisability of forming a sociological association. Although the invitation was issued but a short time before the date set for the conference, some fifty persons, representing twenty-one colleges and universities and a dozen organizations engaged in social amelioration, attended the meeting, while more than sixty others expressed their opinions on the subject by letter. The consensus of opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of forming a sociological association at once, this association to meet hereafter annually at the same time and place as the Economic Association. It was also decided that the new association should be primarily scientific in character, not popular or propagandist, and not to be associated in any way with particular doctrinal ideas or with particular schemes of social betterment. By designating the new society as primarily scientific, however, it was not proposed to exclude practical workers in the sociological field, so long as such workers are also interested in the essentially scientific phases of the subject. Nor should the new society be conceived as in any sense a rival of, or an encroachment upon the domain of, the Economic Association or the Political Science Association. Furthermore, to such organizations as the National Conference of Charities and Correction the new society bears about the same rela-

tion as a treatise on light bears to an elementary manual on ophthalmology.

This, at all events, appears to have been the attitude of the conference. Time will tell, and time alone, what the precise scope of the new society will be. Probably enough has been said to suggest the intentions of those who founded it. A good clew to the nature and aims of the organization, at least for the present, is conveyed by the list of officers elected for the present year: president, Lester F. Ward, Washington, D.C.; first vice-president, William G. Sumner, Yale University; second vice-president, Franklin H. Giddings, Columbia University; secretary and treasurer, C. W. A. Veditz, George Washington University; executive committee,—in addition to the above officers,—Edward A. Ross, University of Nebraska; Walter F. Willcox, Cornell University; Albion W. Small, University of Chicago; Samuel M. Lindsay, University of Pennsylvania; F.M. Davenport, Hamilton College; D. Collin Wells, Dartmouth College.

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